

BIO SAFETY



A Quarterly
Newsletter

Newsletter

From the Desk of Editor



It was time to handover the baton to the next nation in line, and to take stock. The seventh Conference of Parties to the Convention serving as the Meeting of Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (the COP-MOP), marked the end of India's COP presidency, as Korea, the host-in-waiting, took charge. It has been an eventful two-year run, dotted with significant milestones, that would shape and direct future negotiations at the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety forum.

The Protocol is expected to monitor and regulate the biotechnology sector which moves swiftly and is fraught with controversies. To act as a watchdog in this scenario and be an effective one, a team operating anywhere in the world needs to be backed by cutting edge infrastructure and vastly improved human resources. This was the message, clear and loud sent out by developing country Parties. It was therefore not surprising that discussions centered on capacity building and resource mobilization.

Foremost among several other decisions adopted included the decision to convene future meetings of COP-MOP concurrently with the COP to the CBD instead of the current practice of holding the meetings back to back. Other important decisions to advance the implementation of the CPB included; invitation to Parties and other Governments to use the Guidance Document on risk assessment of living modified organisms (LMOs) developed by an expert group and to continue with development of guidance on Socio-economic considerations in accordance with the strategic plan.

Parallel to the COP-MOP 7 various side events including fairs and exhibitions were also organized providing an opportunity for governments, academic institutions, private enterprises, NGOs and other organizations from across the world to participate, learn and share their experiences. It gives me great pleasure to inform that the poster exhibit on the theme "Publications as tools for strengthening Biosafety capacities in India" at the CEPA Fair was well received.

To know more about MOP-7, read on.....

Hem Pande

Additional Secretary

Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change

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Message from Hon'ble Minister of Environment, Forests & Climate Change for South Asia Biosafety Conference, Colombo

The 2nd Annual South Asia Biosafety Conference was held on September 15-16, 2014 at Colombo, Sri Lanka. Shri Prakash Javadekar, Hon'ble Minister of Environment, Forests and Climate Change greeted the delegates at the conference through a message. He was pleased to note that the Biosafety Conference at Colombo is an outcome of the first South Asia Biosafety Conference at New Delhi. The initiative to continue this event annually in the region would provide an opportunity to explore and advance regional harmonization on biosafety. He encouraged the delegates to have meaningful discussions particularly on regional approaches to the risk assessment of LMOs and hoped that this can result in concrete next steps amongst the South Asian neighbours.

The conference was organized under the aegis of South Asia Biosafety Programme (SABP) by CERA-ILSI, BCIL, MERE, COSTI and supported by science academies in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan i.e. Bangladesh Academy of Sciences, National Academy of Agricultural Sciences, India and Pakistan Academy of Sciences



HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SEVENTH MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF PARTIES SERVING AS MEETING OF PARTIES (COP-MOP 7) TO THE CARTAGENA PROTOCOL ON BIOSAFETY



The Seventh Meeting of the Conference of Parties serving as Meeting of Parties (COP-MOP 7) to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (CPB) was held from September 29 to October 3, 2014 in Pyeongchang, Republic of Korea. The COP-MOP 6 President Mr. Ashok Lavasa, Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) opened the meeting by extending a warm welcome to all the participants and congratulated the Government of Republic of Korea for hosting this event. He then invited the Minister of Trade, Industry and Energy, Republic of Korea to assume the Chair of the meeting as the current host.

Post plenary session, the delegates were convened into two working groups (WGs) to consider the agenda items within the time frame available. The working groups were able to reach consensus on certain issues, whereas for some issues, further contact groups were formed such as for risk assessment and risk management, and socio-economic considerations. At the end of the five day meeting 14 decisions were adopted.

Among the most significant outcomes was a decision inviting governments and other stakeholders to use the Guidance on Risk Assessment of LMOs developed by an expert group that was established by the governing body of the Protocol in actual cases of risk assessment and as a tool for capacity-building in risk assessment. A mechanism for revising and improving the Guidance was also agreed with a view to having an improved version of the Guidance by the eighth meeting of the Parties in 2016.

Socio-economic considerations (SEC) arising from the impact of LMOs on the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity were discussed extensively in the contact group co-chaired by Dr. Andreas Heissenberger, Austria and Dr. Ranjini Warriar, Director, MoEF & CC, India. Discussions focused on extending the mandate of the AHTEG on SEC. A decision has been taken to reconvene the AHTEG with a view to develop conceptual clarity and develop an outline for guidance on SEC in accordance with the operational objectives 1.7 of the Strategic Plan.



Among the meeting highlights included the decision to convene future meetings of COP-MOP concurrently with the COP in the same two-week period instead of the current practice of holding the meetings back to back. This is expected to improve the efficiency of structures and processes under the convention and its protocols. This decision received mixed reaction as developing countries will find it difficult to manage the size of their national delegations considering the item-specific expertise needed for conducting the negotiations and prolonged duration of their stay. Concerns were also expressed regarding availability of adequate time for in-depth consideration of some important and emerging issues and availability of funds for participation as mobilising adequate resources has already become a challenging task.

The eighth meeting of the COP MOP will be hosted by Mexico at Los Cabos in 2016.

Further details of the meeting and activities during the inter sessional period can be accessed at <http://bch.cbd.int/protocol>

Photos source: IISD Reporting Services



SPECIAL SESSION ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CPB

A special session on "Implementation of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety" was held during the COP-MOP7 with an objective to provide a platform to share views, experiences with, and challenges to the implementation of the Protocol. The issues regarding mobilization of additional resources to advance implementation of the CPB at the national level was also discussed.

Presentations were made by the panelists from regional groups on their country's experience and lessons learnt. The representatives from South Africa stressed the need for intergovernmental coordination and communication, a fair, just and transparent administrative system, clear communication between the general public and technology developers and independent public research capacity. Dr. Ranjini Warriar from India highlighted the challenges to the implementation: as the difficulty of keeping pace with the fast developments in the biotechnology sector, fragmented human resource capacity, infrastructure and limited resources in existing institutions and inadequate communication between regulatory agencies. She stressed on the need for enhancing institutional capacity in tandem with biotechnology

developments, updating baseline information and use of strategic plan 2011-2020 as a guiding tool in the implementation of the national policies. The representative from Moldova informed about the harmonization of national standards in line with EU directives in her country and the Mexican representative highlighted the importance of awareness raising, information dissemination and national level coordination by presenting the work of inter-ministerial commission on biosafety of GMOs in Mexico (CIBIOGEM). The representative from Norway informed about the challenges associated with the inclusion of aspects of social utility and ethical considerations in LMO assessment in Norway.

The follow up discussion after the presentation focused on issues such as public participation and ensuring stakeholder feedback, regional collaboration and capacity building, ensuring political will, building networks among multicentric biosafety related organizations and using information technologies to collect data and facilitate public participation. Some other Parties viz. Brazil, Nigeria, New Zealand, Malaysia, China etc. also spoke about national efforts in implementation in their countries and made suggestions.

NEW FACTSHEET: STRATEGIC PLAN FOR THE CARTAGENA PROTOCOL ON BIOSAFETY

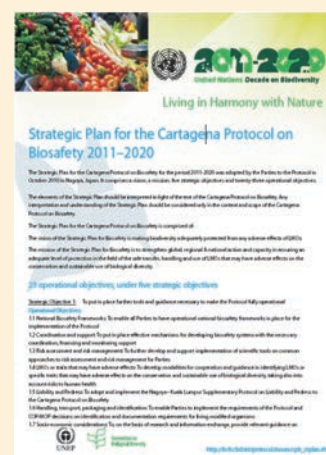
A new factsheet has been prepared by the Secretariat of the Convention on Biology Diversity on "Strategic Plan for the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, 2011-2020". The Strategic Plan for the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety for the period 2011-2020 was adopted by the Parties to the Protocol in October 2010 in Nagoya, Japan. It comprises a vision, a mission, five strategic objectives and twenty-three operational objectives. The five strategic objectives are:

- Strategic Objective 1: To put in place further tools and guidance necessary to make the Protocol fully operational.
- Strategic Objective 2: To further develop and strengthen the capacity of Parties to implement the Protocol.
- Strategic Objective 3: Improve the status of biodiversity by safeguarding ecosystems, species and genetic diversity.
- Strategic Objective 4: Enhance the benefits to all from biodiversity and ecosystem services.
- Strategic Objective 5: Enhance implementation through participatory planning, knowledge management and capacity building.

As per the decision adopting the Strategic Plan, Governments and relevant international organizations were invited to review and align, as appropriate, their national action plans and programmes relevant to the implementation of the Protocol, including their National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans, with the Strategic Plan. The Parties were also requested to allocate adequate human and financial resources necessary to expedite the implementation of the Strategic Plan.

A mid-term evaluation of the Strategic Plan will be carried out in conjunction with the third assessment and review of the effectiveness of the Protocol at the eighth meeting of the Parties to the Protocol in 2016 and the final evaluation will take place at COP-MOP10 in 2020.

This factsheet provides the highlights and operational objectives of the Strategic Plan in a summary form and can be accessed at <http://bch.cbd.int/protocol/e-doc/?news=101112>



CEPA FAIR AT COP-MOP 7

The Communication, Education and Public Awareness (CEPA) fair was held at the margins of the COP-MOP 7 at Pyeongchang, Republic of Korea from September 29 to October 3, 2014. The MoEF&CC made a poster exhibition entitled "Publications as a Tool to Strengthen Biosafety Capacities in India". The poster was designed to highlight the project objectives and activities under the "Phase II Capacity Building Project on Biosafety" that is being implemented by the ministry. The poster showcased various publications being developed as outreach materials including the project brief, biosafety newsletter, series of crop specific biology documents, information brochures for public awareness, translation of the text of Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and Nagoya Kuala Lumpur Supplementary Protocol on Liability and Redress into the national language amongst others.

Africa, Republic of Korea, Nigeria, Mexico and others also participated in the CEPA Fair.

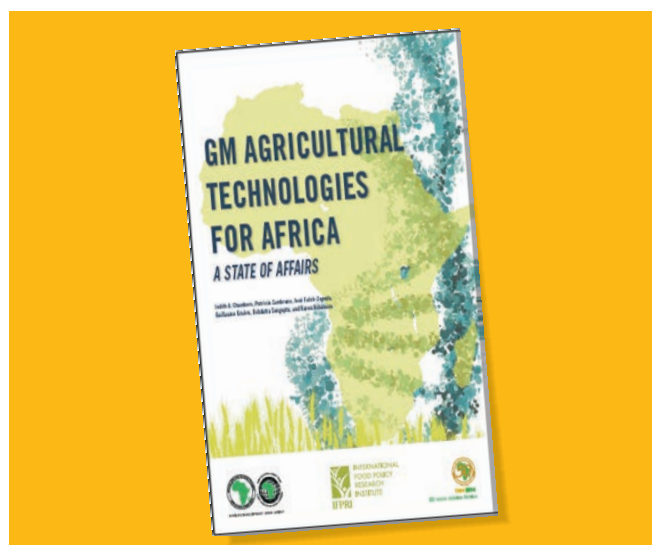
Further details are available at <http://www.cbd.int/mop/cepaair/default.shtm>



GM AGRICULTURAL TECHNOLOGIES FOR AFRICA: A STATE OF AFFAIRS

The African Development Bank (AfDB) and the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) has released a new report in September, 2014 on current information on status of biotechnology in Africa with emphasis on GM crops, issues, constraints and opportunities. The report entitled "GM agricultural technologies for Africa: A state of affairs", highlights the need for a comprehensive, evidence based review of agricultural biotechnology in order to understand how to be able to compete globally. The analysis conducted in this study supports the need to use advanced technologies in order to reposition African agriculture as a competitive contributor in fast evolving global bioeconomy. Series of recommendations have been made regarding financial support for public investment in biotechnology, up gradation and strengthening of science based, cost effective regulatory systems, support towards capacity building, implementation of comprehensive strategy for outreach and communication, development of an ex ante socio-economic impact analysis and expand initiatives with the

African trade partners. The report is available at <http://www.ifpri.org/publication/gm-agricultural-technologies-africa-state-affairs>

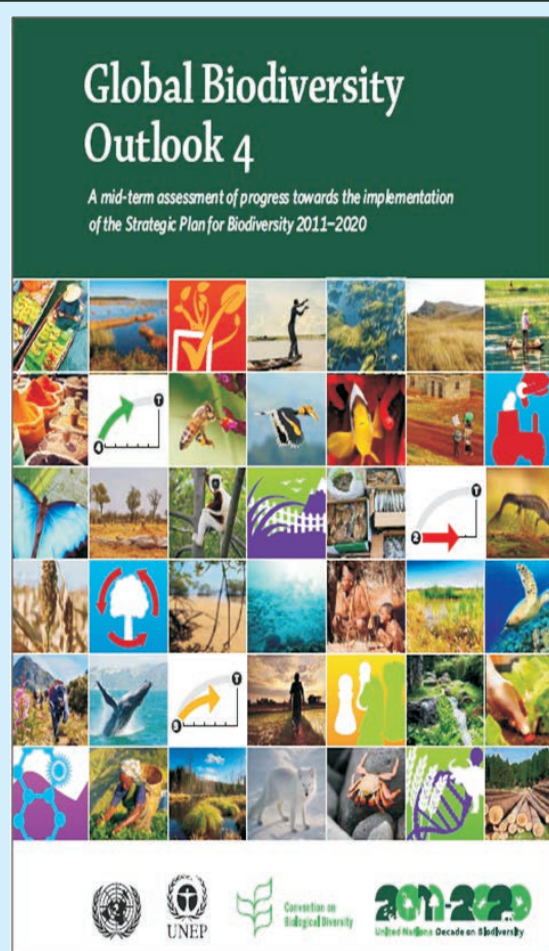


Global Biodiversity Outlook 4

The fourth edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook (GBO-4) was launched at the opening of the twelfth meeting of the Conference of Parties (COP12) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in Pyeongchang, Korea. The Global Biodiversity Outlook is a flagship publication of the CBD that represents a periodic report summarizing the latest data on the status and trends of biodiversity and draws conclusions relevant to the further implementation of the CBD. The preparations for the GBO-4 were initiated following the tenth meeting of COP and is a collective effort from Secretariat of CBD, GBO-4 advisory group, subsidiary body on scientific, technical and technological advice (SBSTTA) Bureau and also inputs from numerous partner organizations and individuals from Government, non-governmental organizations and scientific networks.

The GBO-4 provides information on the mid-term assessment of progress that has been made towards implementation of the 'Strategic Plan for Biodiversity for period 2011-2020'. The report draws upon targets, commitments and activities of countries as reported in the national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs) and national reports, the Parties own assessments of progress towards the Aichi Biodiversity targets. The report takes account of information on status and trends of biodiversity as reported by Parties and in scientific literature and makes use of indicator based statistical extrapolations to 2020 as well as long term model based scenarios. Discussions on this report were also held at the COP 12.

The full report is available at <http://www.cbd.int/GBO4/>



Upcoming Events

Title	Organized/hosted by	Date & Venue	Website
National Events			
Workshop on Regulating Agricultural Biotechnology : Indian and International perspectives	National Institute of Plant Health Management (NIPHM) and Department of Biotechnology, in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)	October 27-30, 2014, Hyderabad	http://niphm.gov.in/Training/Workshop-Regulating-Agricultural-Biotechnology-Indian-and-International-perspectives.pdf
National Seminar on Emerging Problems of Potato	Central Potato Research Institute, Shimla	November 1-2, 2014, Shimla	http://www.nsepp.in/index.html
ICAR Sponsored Winter School on Strategies To Enhance Oilseed Brassica Production Under Climate And Resource Constraint Scenario	Directorate of Rapeseed-Mustard Research, Bharatpur	November 11 - December 1, 2014, Bharatpur	http://www.drmm.res.in/publication/DRM_R_Winter_School.pdf
National Conference of Plant Physiology (NCP-2014) On "Frontiers of Plant Physiology Research: Food Security and Environmental Challenges"	Department of Plant Physiology Orissa University of Agriculture & Technology Bhubaneswar & Indian Society for Plant Physiology, New Delhi	November 23-25, 2014, Bhubaneswar, Orissa	http://www.ouat.ac.in/download/NCP%202014.pdf
National Symposium on "Crop Improvement for Inclusive Sustainable Development"	Punjab Agricultural University	November 7-9, 2014, Ludhiana	http://web.pau.edu/content/banner/792.pdf
Training Programme on Application of Biotechnological Tools and Bioinformatics in Agriculture	Center of Excellence in Agri-Biotechnology & Bioinformatics Infrastructure Facility College of Biotechnology, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel University of Agri. & Tech.	November 12- December 02, 2014, Meerut	http://svbpm Meerut.ac.in/repos/Training%20Programme.pdf
TERI-ITEC Courses 2014-15 Course IV - Applications of biotechnology and its regulation	The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI)	December 8 - 26, 2014 Gurgaon	http://www.teriin.org/index.php?option=com_events&view=details&sid=691&Itemid=110
International Events			
12th Asian Conference and Expert Consultation on Maize for Food, Feed, Nutrition and Environmental Security	Asia-Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions (APAARI), International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT) and Vietnam Academy of Agricultural Sciences (VAAS)	October 27, 29, 2014, Hanoi, Vietnam	http://www.apaari.org/events/12th-conference-on-maize.html
12th Asian Maize Conference and Expert Consultation on "Maize for Food, Feed, Nutrition and Environmental Security"	The Asia-Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions (APAARI), International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT), FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific and CGIAR Research Program on MAIZE	October 30 - November 1, 2014, Bangkok, Thailand	http://www.apaari.org/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2014/07/Program.pdf
Asian Plant Science Conference	Society for Applied Biotechnology, Association for the Advancement of Biodiversity Science and Eurasian Academy of Environmental Sciences	November 1-3, 2014, Lumbini, Nepal	http://www.aabs.org.in/apsc-nepal/index.html
13th International Symposium on the Biosafety of Genetically Modified Organisms (ISBGM013)	International Society for Biosafety Research (ISBR)	November 9-13, 2014, Cape Town, South Africa	http://isbr.info/ISBGM013

Editor

Shri Hem Pande

Additional Secretary, MoEF&CC

Editorial Board

Dr. Ranjini Warriar

Director, MoEF&CC

Dr. K. V. Prabhu

Joint Director (Research), IARI

Dr. Ravi Khetarpal

Regional Director, CABI - South Asia

Dr. Vibha Ahuja

Chief General Manager, BCIL



For feedback please contact:

Dr. Ranjini Warriar, Director

Ministry of Environment, Forests & Climate Change
Indira Paryavarn Bhawan, Jor Bagh Road, Aliganj, New Delhi-110002
Phones: +91 (011) 24695246, Email: warrier@nic.in

Dr. Vibha Ahuja, Chief General Manager

Biotech Consortium India Limited
V Floor, Anuvrat Bhawan, 210, Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Marg,
New Delhi-110002 Phones: +91 (011) 23219064-67
Fax: +91 (011) 23219063 Email: biosafety-mef@nic.in, vibhaahuja.bcil@nic.in

Disclaimer : The information in this newsletter has been compiled from various sources and does not necessarily depict views of the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change Government of India.